



## Easy Step-by-Step Advice to

# Start a Neighborhood Networks Center

**I**n HUD communities throughout the United States, Neighborhood Networks centers are building lives and neighborhoods, presenting residents and property owners and managers with ways to create personal and community change.

*A Neighborhood Networks center is where young and old learn and where they play. It's where they build ties with one another, and those ties become the foundation of a community.*

*What's good to know is that it's easy to start a Neighborhood Networks center in your community.*

### What is Neighborhood Networks?

Neighborhood Networks encourages the development of resource and computer centers in HUD properties. These centers work to build self-reliant neighborhoods for lower-income families and seniors.

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

### What is a Neighborhood Networks center?

Programs and activities at a Neighborhood Networks center help residents move toward economic independence. Recognizing the role of information technology in today's economy, centers offer Internet access and computer

training, as well as programs and activities in the areas of employment, education, health care and social services for people of all ages.

Most often, the Neighborhood Networks center is located at the property, making it accessible to all residents. Every center is different because each one is created to respond to the individual needs of a community.

Start a Neighborhood Networks center and you will be in good company! There are more than 600 Neighborhood Networks centers in rural and urban communities in every state in the nation, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

### How can I start a successful Neighborhood Networks center?

The process is a simple one. Before getting started, it is a good idea to talk with a HUD Project Manager or Neighborhood Networks Coordinator. You can find a list of HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinators at the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org).

We suggest that you follow the recommended steps listed here, so that you can build a solid, successful Neighborhood Networks center. Of all the steps, only Step 7 — submitting a Business Plan — is required to receive the Neighborhood Networks center designation. The *Neighborhood Networks Resource Guide, Second Edition 1999*, fully describes the process of organizing a center in Chapter 1. To obtain a free copy of the guide, call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at 1-888-312-2743 or download it from the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org).

### Neighborhood Networks Facts...

**WHAT:** Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD in 1995. It encourages the development of resource and community technology centers in HUD properties.

- More than 800 centers in operation\*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 682 properties with centers in planning\*

**WHO:** Serves HUD housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

\*as of 07/01

## **These easy steps will get your center underway!**

### **■ Step 1: Enlist participation and organize a steering committee**

Key to the success of a Neighborhood Networks center is the early participation of residents and property owners and managers. With that in mind, your first step should be to form a steering committee and decide how to structure your group.

### **■ Step 2: Poll your residents and assess their needs and talents**

A questionnaire or survey can help identify the needs and interests of residents. Once that is done, you should identify your community's "resources" by taking an inventory of public and private institutions. These "resources," as well as local employers, are potential partners that could support your programs and activities.

### **■ Step 3: Design a program**

The data you have collected will help your steering committee make a well-informed decision about the program areas that best suit the interests of your residents. Programs most likely offered by a Neighborhood Networks center are adult education, after-school activities, job preparation and placement, elder services and business development.

### **■ Step 4: Determine your center's start-up needs**

Decide on the number of computers and the types of hardware and software you will need, as well as your space requirements. You will also want to address such issues as security and insurance.

### **■ Step 5: Establish your center's operations**

It's all beginning to fall into place! At this point, you are ready to set a schedule, identify your staff needs, design an outreach strategy for recruiting partners and establish how you will do a periodic evaluation.

### **■ Step 6: Put the numbers on paper and create your budget**

Now you are ready to assemble a start-up budget and an operating budget. This is the time when you list such income sources as private- and public-sector contributions, and income generated from business activities and user fees.

One of those funding sources can be your property. With permission from HUD, property owners may also use property funds to pay the costs of a center and its related programs. Specific information on how to request permis-

sion from HUD can be found in *HUD Handbook 4381.5, Chapter 9* and *HUD Notice 99-28*. This guidance, which can be obtained from your local HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator, permits use of various types of project income for center use.

This is a good time to decide how to go about raising funds.

### **■ Step 7: Draft and submit the business plan**

Your business plan — an integral and necessary part of becoming a Neighborhood Networks center — is the framework for your center's operation. It will identify your financial plans and day-to-day management of the center. It will also describe the programs and activities you plan to offer and their value to residents. The Neighborhood Networks Business Plan format, published by HUD, will be of value to you. It is available through the local HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator or online at the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org).

## **What other resources are available to help Neighborhood Networks center planners?**

Several resources can help you start a Neighborhood Networks center and learn about successful programs and activities at centers nationwide. Among these resources are the *Neighborhood Networks Resource Guide, Second Edition, 1999* (available in print and online) and the *HUD Management Agent Handbook (HUD Handbook 4381.5)*. Also, *Guidance for Developing the Neighborhood Networks Business Plan* (in print or online at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org)) includes easy-to-follow directions for creating your center's business plan.

You can also obtain copies of the more than 20 guides that focus on every area of center operation, including funding, program development, employment, business development, health care, senior living and child care. For copies, just call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at 1-888-312-2743.

## **For more information, contact:**

✉ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
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Rockville, MD 20850

Web site [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org)

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**Visit our website at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org)**

